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AUTHOR Murray, Wayne R.; Pettibone, Timothy J.
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ABSTRACT

Mexican American and Anglo perceptions of a Southwestern university environment were compared using the College and University Environment Scales. The instrument was used as a psychological test rather than a group consensus instrument. Construct validity was maintained using factor analysis to determine the most meaningful items for the sample of 322 students. Of the original 160 items, 38 were used to compare the groups on 4 environmental dimensions. Factor scores were then used with a 2-way analysis of variance to compare the groups. Sex differences were found on the community and awareness scales and an ethnicity difference was found on the scholarship dimension. A related document is ED 065 208. (Author/PS)

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Wayne R. Murray
Dallas Independent School District

Timothy J. Pettibone
New Mexico State University

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Mexican American and Anglo perceptions of a Southwestern university environment were compared using the College and University Environment Scales. The instrument was used as a psychological test rather than a group consensus instrument. Construct validity was maintained using factor analysis to determine the most meaningful items for the sample of 322 students. Thirty-eight of the original 160 items were used to compare the groups on four environmental dimensions. Factor scores were then used with two way analysis of variance to compare the groups. Sex differences were found on the community and awareness scales and an ethnicity difference was found on the scholarship dimension.

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Objective

The objective of the study was to compare the perceptions of the University of Texas at El Paso (U.T. El Paso) environment by full-time unmarried undergraduate Mexican American students with the perceptions of full-time unmarried undergraduate Anglo students.

Methods

The College and University Environment Scales (CUES) was designed to establish profiles for colleges or universities on the environmental dimensions community, scholarship, propriety, awareness, and practicality. Using the CUES responses from a sample of students, institutions receive a score for each dimension. The scores can then be compared with other institutions. Since the present study involved within institutional comparisons with the student as the unit of measure it was deemed necessary to refactor the instrument for the U.T. El Paso sample in order to maintain construct validity. Items which failed to correlate with a semantically meaningful factor at least at the 0.40 level were deleted from the 160 item questionnaire. In the second part of the scoring procedure factor scores were obtained for each subject based on the items retained during the factor analysis. The factor scores were obtained for each subject based on the items retained during the factor analysis. The factor scores were then used as dependent variables in a two-way (ethnicity by sex) analysis of variance for each dependent variable. The probability of a type one error was set at approximately 0.05 for testing the hypotheses of equal means for the groups, Mexican Americans and Anglos.

Data Source

A stratified nonproportional random sample of 480 full-time unmarried undergraduate students was selected from the U.T. El Paso student body. Nearly seventy percent of the sample responded to a telephone request and participated in the study by completing the 160 items CUES. Approximately fifty percent of the sample were Anglos. Also, males and females were approximately equally represented in the sample. U.T. El Paso, located on the United States-Mexican border, has a student body which consists of approximately thirty-five percent Mexican Americans--the largest percentage of Mexican Americans in any four-year school in the United States.

Results

Factor anaytic scoring procedure. The first result of the factor analytic scoring procedure was that the instrument appeared to measure four rather than five dimensions of the U.T. El Paso environment. No practicality factor appeared to be present for the

U.T. El Paso students using the CUES. Therefore, the dimensions community, scholarship, propriety, and awareness were used as dependent measure for the study. Thirty-eight of the original 160 items were retained for the comparison of the groups. All eight new community items and all ten new scholarship items were originally classified as community and scholarship items. One of the ten new propriety items come from the practicality scale and one came from the community scale. Two of the ten new awareness items came from the community scale and one came from the scholarship scale. All retained items were semantically meaningful on their new factors. Reliability coefficients based on Cronbach's alpha were computed for the factors obtained in the scoring procedure. The reliability coefficients were respectively 0.58, 0.65, 0.60, and 0.61 for the community, scholarship, propriety, and awareness factors.

Hypothesis testing. The results of the two-way analysis of variance were: (1) while not statistically significant men tended to score higher on the community scale than women; (2) Anglos scored significantly higher on the scholarship dimension than Mexican Americans; (3) neither sex nor ethnicity differences were observed on the propriety scale; and (4) males scored significantly higher on the awareness factor than women. Since two of the three differences observed for the sample showed sex differences or trends toward sex differences and only one dependent variable (scholarship) showed an ethnicity difference it was concluded that an individual's sex played a greater role in influencing environmental perceptions than his ethnicity. While a comprehensive comparison of the academic performance of Anglos and Mexican Americans has not been completed at U.T. El Paso, pilot studies indicate that Mexican American students achieve at approximately the same level in English and History as Anglos and somewhat lower than Anglos in mathematics and science. While it was felt that academic achievement was related to perceptions of the scholastic environment no attempt was made to imply a causal relationship between the two contructs.

Educational Importance of the Study-Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study it was concluded that: (1) construct validity can be maintained by using factor analysis in the scoring procedure for standardized instruments; (2) with the exception of the scholarship scale Mexican American students' perceptions of the U.T. El Paso environment differ little from Anglo students' environmental perceptions; and (3) female students at U.T. El Paso view the university environment as a less friendly and congenial place than male students. Also, men see the environment as fostering greater political and aesthetic awareness than women.

TABLE 1

The Four Factor Solution[a]

New No.	Original No.	Item	Loadings I	II	III	IV	Communality
		Community					
1.	22.	The school helps everyone get acquainted.	39	-12	10	14	20
2.	71.	This school has a reputation for being very friendly.	56	-10	16	-1	35
3.	77.	It's easy to get a group together for card games, singing, going to the movies, etc.	65	-7	-18	12	48
4.	78.	Students commonly share their problems.	64	-3	-7	12	43
5.	80.	There is a lot of group spirit.	45	-24	14	11	30
6.	125.	Most of the students here are pretty happy.	48	-4	34	13	36
7.	127.	In most classes the atmosphere is very friendly.	51	-3	12	27	35
8.	128.	Groups of students from the college often get together for parties or visits during holdiays.	55	-6	-20	22	40

CONTINUED

Coefficient a = .58.

[a]The decimal points for correlations have been omitted.

TABLE 1 (continued)

New No.	Original No.	Item	Loadings I	II	III	IV	Communality
		Scholarship					
9.	13.	Most courses require intensive study and preparation out of class.	1	-69	- 5	1	47
10.	14.	Students set high standards of achievement for themselves.	20	-58	18	5	41
11.	18.	It is fairly easy to pass most courses without working very hard.	9	64	-14	3	44
12.	19.	The school is outstanding for the emphasis and support it gives to pure scholarship and basic research.	14	-57	9	15	37
13.	20.	Standards set by the professors are not particularly hard to achieve.	13	50	11	-2	27
14.	62.	Most courses are a real intellectual challenge.	10	-63	10	20	46
15.	63.	Students put a lot of energy into everything they do in class and out.	22	-56	17	3	39
16.	68.	There is a lot of interest in the philosophy and methods of science.	16	-45	9	17	26
17.	69.	People around here seem to thrive on difficulty--the tougher things get, the harder they work.	10	-47	16	17	28
18.	114.	Excellence in scholarship is the dominant feature of this institution.	13	-50	11	6	28

CONTINUED

Coefficient a = .65.

TABLE 1 (continued)

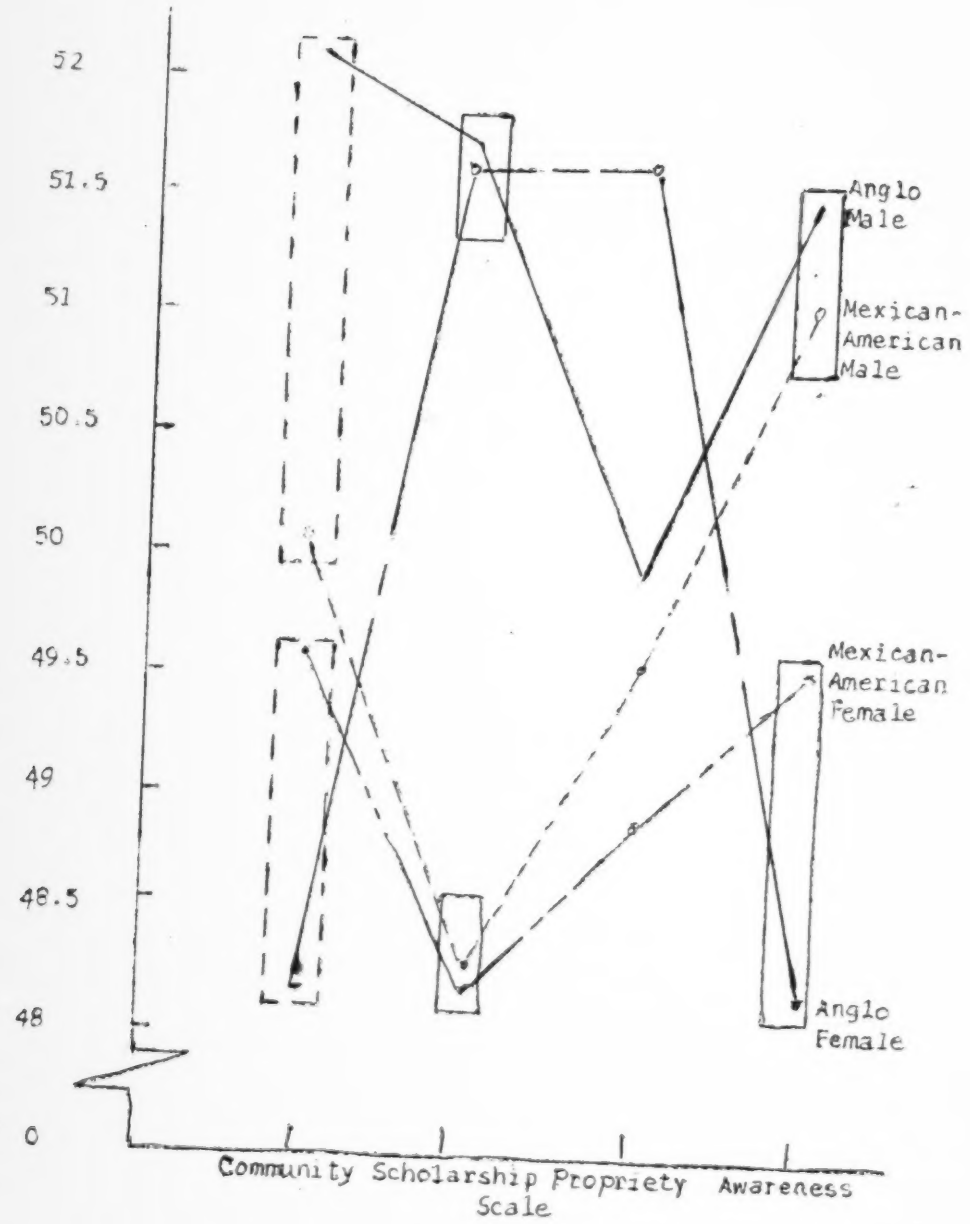
New No.	Original No.	Item	Loadings I	II	III	IV	Communality
		Propriety					
19.	10.	Anyone who knows the right people in the faculty or administration can get a better break here (from Practicality).	-17	- 3	-40	3	19
20.	26.	There is a great deal of borrowing and sharing among the students (from Community).	34	4	-47	- 4	34
21.	42.	Most student rooms are pretty messy.	-13	12	-43	8	23
22.	43.	People here are always trying to win an argument.	-11	- 5	-46	9	23
23.	50.	Students are conscientious about taking good care of school property.	- 8	-18	48	8	28
24.	93.	There always seem to be a lot of little quarrels going on.	- 1	- 9	-55	6	32
25.	94.	Students rarely get drunk and disorderly.	- 2	-12	55	- 4	32
26.	95.	Most students show a good deal of caution and self-control in their behavior.	- 1	-13	46	19	27
27.	97.	Students pay little attention to rules and regulations.	16	21	-46	- 3	29
28.	149.	Faculty members are always polite and proper in their relations with students.	8	- 8	45	3	22

CONTINUED

Coefficient a = .60.

TABLE 1 (continued)

New No.	Original No.	Item	Loadings I	II	III	IV	Communality
		Awareness					
29.	34.	There are a good many colorful and controversial figures on the faculty.	15	-15	-10	46	26
30.	82.	The expression of strong personal belief or conviction is pretty rare around here.	- 7	9	-12	-48	26
31.	86.	Course offerings and faculty in the social sciences are outstanding.	- 4	-18	- 2	49	28
32.	90.	Modern art and music get little attention here.	- 7	4	- 4	-46	22
33.	107.	Many faculty members are involved in services or consulting activities for outside groups--business, adult education, etc. (from Community).	0	- 1	- 2	58	33
34.	111.	New ideas and theories are encouraged and vigorously debated (from Scholarship).	26	-24	- 4	54	42
35.	124.	There are courses which involve students in activities with groups or agencies in the local community (from Community).	5	- 6	- 2	49	24
36.	130.	There are courses or voluntary seminars that deal with problems of social adjustment.	11	3	-14	57	36
37.	137.	Many student groups invite faculty members to lead special discussions.	8	3	- 2	61	38
38.	152.	Students have real authority to determine some campus policies and procedures.	13	-12	14	48	28
Coefficient a = .61.		EIGENVALUE	5.33	3.04	2.02	1.83	
		VARIANCE	14.03	22.04	27.35	32.17	



Results of the hypothesis testing